TO: Principal Hughes

FROM: Alexander Overby, ELA

DATE: June 1, 2017

RE: New 10th and 12th Grade English Hip-hop Unit

It is now the end of the first year using *Georgia Collections* as the basis for curriculum in every Secondary grade level. After this year, teachers have become familiar with the textbook and have learned how to best use it to accomplish standards-based goals. The *Collections* textbook contains six units. This year, the most units taught by a teacher is five. Most teachers taught four. The textbook encourages supplemental texts, therefore teachers tend to take their time using texts to teach the standards—rather than teaching the texts themselves. During the Fall *Georgia Collections* training, trainers informed teachers that the entire textbook does not need to be taught. I propose supplementing the textbook with an entire unit dedicated to hip-hop, which culminates in a school-wide poetry/rap slam.

The six-week unit will occur at the end of the year. In this six-week unit students will accomplish three goals. During the first two-week period, students will study the history of hip-hop and its four elements: rap, breakdancing, graffiti art, and DJing. Students will analyze the ways in which each of these forms of art challenged a status quo of inequality. During the second two-week period, students will create a poetry anthology composed of three sections. Each section will follow a common theme (e.g. racial inequality). The three sections will be as follows: classical poetry, rap lyrics, and student-created poems/lyrics. Finally, during the final two-week period students will read and sort and accept/decline submissions to the school-wide poetry/rap slam from the entire school (which will begin to be accepted after Christmas Break). Each of the sections of the unit will be standards-based—primarily standards concerned with text analysis and writing.

This Hip-hop unit is the epitome of cultural relevancy. Rap music—one of the four elements—is the most widely listened to music, especially for high school students. Students will be able to engage with the music they love, but analyze it from a literary and cultural lens. During the first four weeks, students will constantly assess the cultural value of the artistic movement and make determinations on its common themes. ELA standards will be directly related to every activity, learning goal, and assessment. During the second two weeks and the slam, students will have an opportunity to exercise their creative voice in free expression, thereby empowering themselves through art. In all, this unit would address the need for more culturally relevant curriculum.

There are three 10th and 12th grade teachers—including myself. Ms. Hill and Ms. Elliot (the other two teachers) support the inclusion of the new unit. We three are working closely together to develop and day-by-day unit plan, which will be able to present to you at your convenience. This unit plan can be saved and adapted for any future teacher of the unit. As far as the poetry/rap slam is concerned, the only need from the school will be the use of the auditorium and chaperones (which I can recruit from willing faculty). The students in the 10th and 12th classrooms will be required (pending parent signatures) to participate in managing the event. The school-wide and county community will be invited and encouraged to attend. At your convenience, please contact me so that Ms. Hill, Ms. Elliot, and I may discuss the new unit.